

COMMUNITISATION OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION IN NAGALAND: ROLE OF VILLAGE EDUCATION COMMITTEE WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PHEK

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ABSTRACT

Since 2001, Communitisation in Nagaland started as a unique partnership between government and community involving transfer of ownership of public resources and assets, control over service delivery, empowerment, decentralization, delegation and capacity building for improving the delivery of public utility system. A study was conducted with an objective to assess the role perception of Village Education Committee members with regard to the management and administration of schools and involvement for improvement of quality education and to study the result of communitisation. The method of data collection is based on primary and secondary sources. Respondents were selected based on the purposive random sampling method. Data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics by manual counting and marking of frequencies in tabulation sheet. The finding revealed that through the implementation of communitisation, there has been a marked improvement in the percentage of students' enrolment, teacher attendance and monitoring of the quantity and quality of food for mid-day meal scheme after the responsibility of elementary education management was handed over to the Village Education Committee, which proves that communitisation has done a noteworthy job to the people of Phek district of Nagaland.

KEYWORDS: *Communitisation, VEC, Elementary, School & Nagaland*

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INTRODUCTION

The constitutional commitment to ensure free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 years is one of the salient features of the Indian constitution. India, with a vision of achieving this' spelt out in the National Policy of Education, 1986 and converted the mission into functional goals in the Programmes of Action, 1992. A number of schemes and programmes were launched in pursuance of the emphasis embodied in NPE and POA. Since the elementary stage of education is very crucial for further academic, the Central and State government have over a period of time evolved strategies to have universal access, check drop-out rates and improve levels of achievement in the schools, the element of which include: creating parental awareness and community mobilization; involvement of communities and Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) (73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments 1992); economic incentives; improvement in infrastructure facility in schools. But the nation's efforts to achieve "basic education for all" could not be a success till today but efforts are not given out.

The government of Nagaland has taken up various measures for the quantitative improvement of education and has made considerable achievement in the elementary sector but the functioning of the schools is far from satisfactory. The system of educational administration is an extreme example of centralization where all powers and responsibilities with regard to appointments and finance are centralized at the state level. The state level machinery is enabling to cope with the heavy workload while there is no clear responsibility and accountability at the lower

level. This excessive centralization is also coupled with hardly any transparency and what actually goes on is that the name of educational administration is not known to many. This becomes a breeding ground for leakage and corruption. It also creates apathy and inertia; the community and NGOs are cut off from the people for whom they exist. This realization brought the conception of Communitisation.

Therefore, in order to improve the quality of education, the government has envisaged the concept of COMMUNITISATION with an effort to transfer certain management responsibilities to the community and to involve them in the educational system management. The aim is to provide quality education and improve the human capabilities of the children through a sense of belonging and sharing amongst the community members and to utilize the material and human resources for the betterment of the schools. This conception resulted in the enactment of “The Nagaland Communitisation of Public Institution and Services Act”, in 2002. Communitisation of an institution of the government means transferring the ownership to and sharing responsibilities of its management with the community. It thus includes decentralisation of authority, delegation of responsibility, empowerment of the community and building up of a synergistic relationship between the government and the community to spur growth and development of institutions. In a communitised school, the management function would substantially vest in the community. Salary of the government teachers would be disbursed through the village education committee which will be empowered to control teachers in a variety of ways, including the operation of “No Work, No Pay” principles; the community would get the funds for key purposes, such as the purchase of textbooks, furniture, repair of the school building, etc. they would treat the school as their own, thereby contributing their best in cash and kind. The government would continue to supervise, support and supplement the activities. Communitisation thus ensures investment of the community's social capital for the betterment of the school and improvement of education. The concept is to inculcate a sense of ownership of public institutions that will ensure better management. The latent resources of the community are enormous and giving the sense of ownership the institution is expected to progress towards levels of excellence.

In the light of the above fact, it is important to examine how effective is the elementary educational system in Nagaland is functioning. To address this issue, it is my endeavor to examine the role of the community in the improvement of the education system. An attempt was made to study the role perception and attitude of the VEC regarding communitisation and also analyzed the progress of quality education after the implementation of communitisation.

STUDY AREA

Phek district occupies a special place in the history of Nagaland. The people of Phek district are Chakhesang and Pochury. Phek district was granted a full-fledged district on 19th December 1973. Phek district is located southeast of Nagaland and shares a porous boundary with Myanmar. It lies between 94° E and 96° E longitudes and 25° N and 26° N latitudes and is bounded by Myanmar and Tuensang in the East, Tuensang and Zunheboto district in the North, Kohima district in the West and Manipur state in the South. The total area of the district is 2,026 Sq/kms. As per details from Census 2011, the total population of Phek District is 163,418 and the sex ratio is 951 females per 1000 males. The district recorded 78.05 percent literacy rate with 83.66% male and 72.21% female literacy rate. There are five Rural Development (RD) blocks; they are: a) KIKRUMA, b) PFUTSERO, c) SEKRUZU, d) PHEK and e) MELURI

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following objectives were raised for the study.

- To study the perception of the members of the village education committee (VEC) about the roles in the school administration for improving the quality of elementary education in the district
- To study the result before and after the communitisation, and to analyze the progress of quality education.

METHODOLOGY

The present study has been conducted on 50 government elementary schools of the population. The schools were selected in this manner that is 10 schools each from the entire five Rural Development blocks namely, Kikruma, Meluri, Phek, Pfutsero and Sekrezu of Phek district. Questionnaires and interviews were used for collection of data. 101 VECs out of which 84 were male and 17 females were given the questionnaires and were interviewed. Secondary data are collected from government records, journals and other publications. The descriptive study method of research is chosen for the present study and the data collected were tabulated according to the various components of the study. The responses collected were transferred into a table in numerical forms and were analyzed on the descriptive techniques and percentage.

DISCUSSIONS

The Village Education Committee role is to establish a link between school and community and to create awareness about the importance of formal education. In addition, it is also expected to take up the task of management of school affairs along with school administration. VEC is considered vital for promoting enrolment and retention of children in school, especially girls. It is the responsibility of VEC to ensure that every child in the age group of six to fourteen years gets to enroll in schools and completes elementary education. A total of 101 VEC respondents were selected for the study out of which 84 were male and 17 were female. The researcher has posed certain queries to the VEC members to examine their role perception and opinions towards communitisation of elementary education in Phek district. Analyzing various field reports it can be stated that there is no uniform agreement on the response it differs from individual to individual. Some of the responses have been discussed below;

- **(i). After the implementation of Communitisation, which area is being more effective?**

Here it indicates some more visible impact of communitisation programme as 94.05% stated that teachers are more regular after the implementation of communitisation, 87.12% increase in enrolment, 65.35% improvement in retention rate, 69.30% improvement in the performance of the students and 60.39% increase in more number of girls students. After the implementation of communitisation, even the villagers too started making voluntary contributions in cash, kind and or labor (social work) for development activities. Members of the villagers were so enthused about it, and they voluntarily participate in cleaning the school premises and in fencing the compound in their free time and on holiday.

- **(ii). Does VEC ensure Universal Enrolment and Retention?**

Under communitisation of elementary education institutions, Responsibility for children's enrolment and retention in the school is one of the principles and salient features. The VEC is given the responsibility to ensure universal enrolment and universal retention of children in the school. It is the responsibility of the VEC to see that all children within the age group of 6-14 years are enrolled and retained in the schools.

While examining the view of whether VECs ensure universal enrolment and retention, majority of the respondents 64.36% were in agreement with the query whereas 26.73% disagreed with the query and 08.91% were not responded to this item.

- **(iii). Are the Grants and Funds utilized successfully according to the purpose?**

The community through VEC is empowered to operate the two VEC bank accounts – one current account for transaction school staff salary and one saving account for depositing other financial grants and contributions for school development. The interest earned out of the savings bank account will form part of the education fund. In this way, the financial powers are decentralized to the village community.

On enquiring the VEC on whether the funds and grants utilize according to the purpose. The majority of the respondents 83.17% were in agreement with the view by saying that grants and funds are utilized according to the purpose. A minimum number of VEC's have not responded to this item 5.94% and 10.89% answered negatively by saying that grants and funds are not utilized according to the purpose.

- **(iv). What disciplinary action does the VEC take for the misconduct of Teachers?**

The VEC is empowered to disburse the monthly salary of the school staff transacted through the VEC saving bank account. It has been authorized to initiate disciplinary action against any erring school staff if any irregularities are detected. Since VEC is authorized to take appropriate disciplinary action against the erring school staff by withholding monthly salary under no work no pay policy and the VEC can also report to a higher authority on any serious administrative problem beyond the solution by the education committee.

So, on enquiring to the VEC about what disciplinary action do they take for misconduct of teacher? The majority 73.26% of the VEC take action of no work no pay for misconduct of teachers, 7.93% withholding of pay, 4.95% reporting to a higher authority and 13.86% as others.

- **(v). Does your School receive Mid-Day-Meals regularly?**

Here it reflects how the school VEC responded to the view on whether the schools received mid-day meals regularly.

This study shows that a significant majority of the respondents 94% of the VEC respondents responded positively by saying that they received mid-day meals regularly and monitoring the quantity and quality of food for mid-day meal scheme. A minimum number (6%) answered negatively by saying that they had not received it regularly.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Most of the Village Education Committee work excellently for all round development of elementary schools. On enquiring to the VEC about whether they perform the following administrative duties, majority of the VEC respondents performed withdrawal and disbursement of salaries, ensured disciplinary action against irregular teachers, monitored attendance and retention and to identify dropouts to rejoin school, performed day to day management of the school and performed the appointment of substitute teachers. Interestingly some more visible impact of communitisation programme is that teachers are more regular after the implementation of communitisation. Before the schoolsementation of this scheme, teachers' attendance in the school was very weak. In some schools, it is learned that the government appointed teachers never come to school instead they sent proxy teachers. The study shows that teachers are more regular with the majority of 90.05 percent, also increase in students' enrolment, improvement in retention rate, improvement in the performance of the students and increase in a greater number of girls students, which shows that that the VECs took care of the management work of elementary education at present proving that communitisation had done a noteworthy job to the people of Phek

district to be a part with the educational world.

People's involvement and participation at the grass-root level is important and essential for the successful implementation of the programme of universalisation of elementary education, which is the major goal of communitisation. Education is not the responsibility of the teachers alone; it is the collective responsibility of all parents, community members, knowledgeable persons, teachers and students. Communitisation is therefore a process of socialization which helps children cope with the natural and social environment. Despite some weaknesses, the overall performance of the scheme is worth appreciation. The scheme has placed Nagaland state in a global platform for its success story.

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